

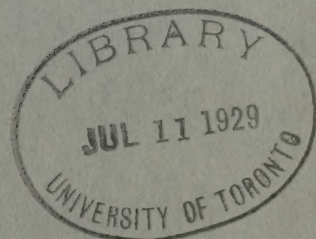
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The Rev. John Langhorn

(Early Canadian missionaries. No. 2)

and 2d Amer. Antiq. Soc.



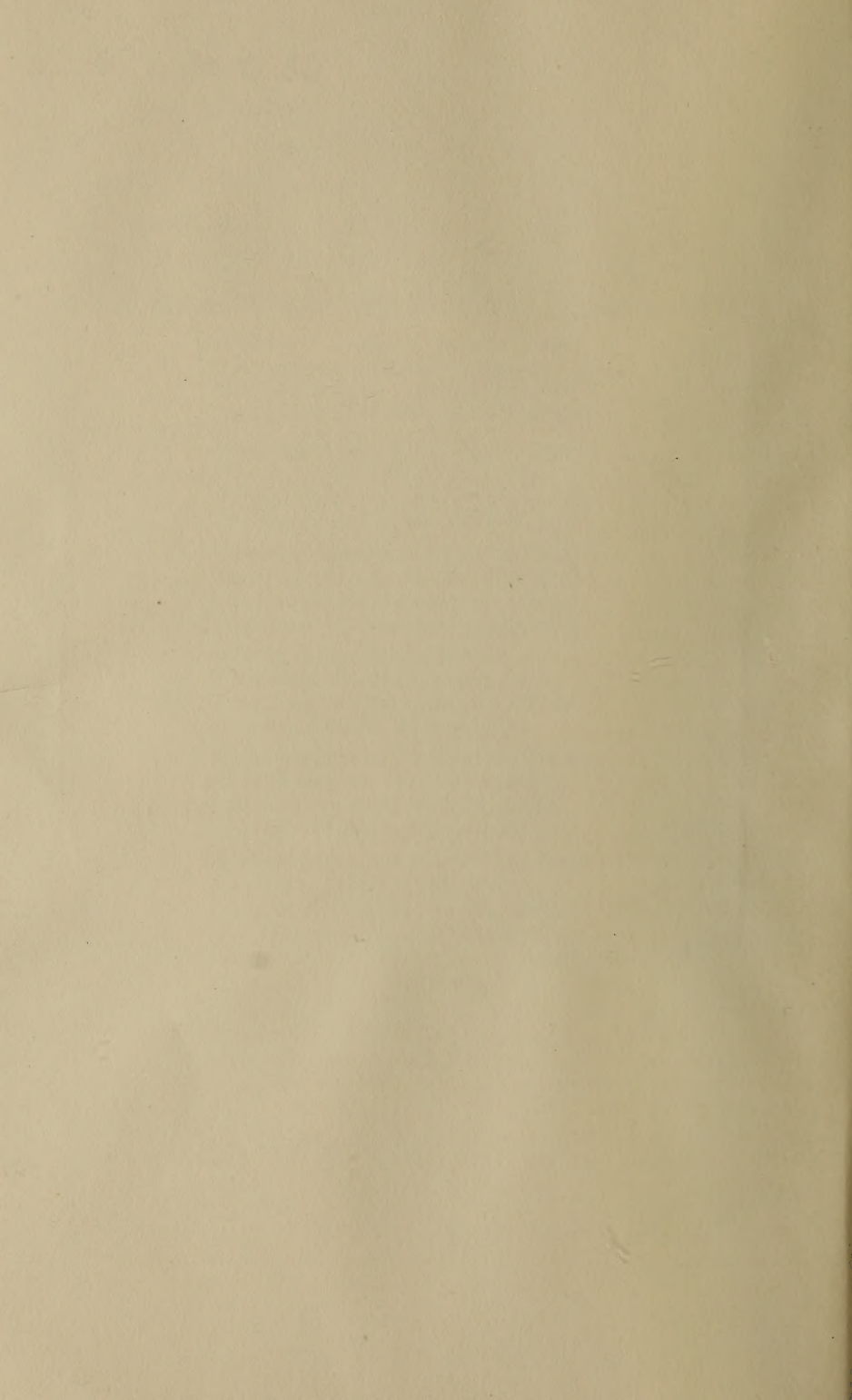
EARLY CANADIAN MISSIONARIES.

No. II.¹—THE REV. JOHN LANGHORN.;

ANOTHER of the early Missionaries in Canada was the Rev. John Langhorn. He was a native of Wales, and had been educated at St. Bees, Cumberland. He was afterwards licensed to the Curacy of Hart Hill, Cheshire, where, becoming known to Dr. Porteus, then Bishop of Chester, and Dr. Townson, at that time Rector of Malpas, he was by them strongly recommended to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, who appointed him to a district of Mr. Stuart's Mission. He almost immediately embarked for Canada, and arrived at Cataraqui on the last day of September, 1787. The following extracts, dated February 4th, 1788, giving an account of his journey by land and water from Montreal to Cataraqui, will give some notion of the real hardness which a Missionary in Canada was compelled to endure during the early period of its settlement.

“ At last, by applying to the Government, I got a passage in a sloop carrying military stores. There were a hundred barrels of gunpowder on board her. We had no fire on board for cooking victuals, all the passage. We were run aground towards the

¹ A Notice of the Rev. John Stuart appeared in No. II. of the Colonial Church Chronicle.



middle of the river, about half way between Sorel and Montreal, and there stuck fast, whilst a large vessel went past us. We got a boat belonging to a popish priest, and unloaded into it a ton and a half of bullets, upon which we floated again, got off the shallow, put the balls in again, and so went about our business. To the best of my remembrance, I was twelve days in going from Quebec to Montreal, having a disagreeable passage.

“ On the third day, I think, after my arrival at Montreal, I went on foot to La Chine, my baggage being carried in a cart, which expense I paid myself. The day following, being Sunday, I began my journey from La Chine to Carleton Island, going sometimes on foot, and being sometimes in an open boat, with no cover but my umbrella. The first night in this journey I had for a bed a hay-mow; another night I lay upon a house floor, in my clothes; part of another night I had my abode in a wood, but I would not lie down, and it sometimes rained; another night, the greatest part of it I was in a wood; this night I lay down, but it was fair. On Sunday forenoon, the last day of September, 1787, I arrived at Carleton Island. I had a letter from Quebec to Colonel Porter, at Carleton Island, who was now absent at Cataragui. At Carleton Island I requested to have the boat stay for me an hour and a half, which was refused; and if I had stayed behind it, I suppose possibly I might have found consequences which I should not have liked. The same day I got to Carleton Island I started from thence to Cataragui, and arrived there that day at eleven o'clock in the night. I was, perhaps, in more danger between Carleton Island and Cataragui than in all my journey before.

“ Cataragui is now Kingston, in the province of Quebec: when I was there, I went to see the Rev. Mr. Stuart; if I mistake not, he asked me if I had got a stock of patience.”

As an instance of the frugal mode of life which a Missionary in these days was compelled to adopt, it may be mentioned that Mr. Langhorn made an agreement for board and lodging, at Ernest Town, at the rate of 25*l.* currency a-year.

The total number of souls committed to his charge was about 1500; but of these he computed that nearly four-fifths were dissenters, of nine or ten different denominations. This population was thinly scattered over several townships, so that, though his flock was small, he had to search for them up and down a country of forty miles square. Mr. Langhorn's duty, therefore, was one of a very laborious kind, for, besides his Sunday services at Ernest Town, he had to attend in the week-days at not fewer than eight different stations. Among these were three others called after members of the Royal family, Fredericksburg, Adolphus Town, and Sophiasburg, settlements

which front the Bay of Quenti, and had been surveyed and opened for location to the "United Empire Loyalists," a name of distinction given to the faithful band who submitted to banishment rather than transfer their allegiance.

The work of an itinerant Missionary is sufficiently toilsome, even when he is provided with a horse, but Mr. Langhorn, being somewhat corpulent, never rode. His plan was to sling his surplice and necessary outfit, including a Bible and book of Common Prayer for service, in a knapsack on his back, and so set forth on foot to visit his scattered flocks. Two years after he had taken possession of his Mission, he is described by the Bishop of Nova Scotia, as, "though uncouth, and little acquainted with the world, a very worthy, conscientious man, diligent in discharging the duties of his office, and of a humane, benevolent disposition, and much respected for those virtues."

For the first two years this primitive Missionary had no other provision than the stipend of 50*l.* allowed by the Society; but the Government annuity, with arrears, was afterwards granted to him.

His stations, or preaching-houses, though of course unconsecrated, he used to distinguish by the name of an Apostle or Saint, and visit them all periodically. From time to time he pushed into new settlements: thus, in 1793, he went to Amherst, where he "preached the first sermon that ever was preached there since the Creation, as far as is known." The next year he preached forty-one times, and in 1795 fifty-two, at the different out-lying stations,—“not a despicable year's work,” as he himself remarks,—“if he had done nothing else.”

He used to make a point of calling upon every new family which came to settle within his bounds, and by this early attention secured or conciliated many who had before been either indifferent or hostile. In the frequent and extensive journeys on foot which his duty compelled him to undertake, he was of course compelled to depend upon such accommodation for the night as the farmhouse of the settler, or the shanty of the backwoodsman could afford; but he always insisted upon paying for the food and shelter which he received. When a guest for the night, he always conducted the family worship, and on these occasions made use of the prayers of Bishop Wilson. No Missionary would be fit for his office in such a country as Canada was at the end of the last century, or even as it is now in any of the newly cleared settlements, who should be over delicate or nice on the subject of bed or board,—and Mr. Langhorn seems to have been altogether superior to any such considerations. On one occasion, having been detained on his way, he did not reach the house, where he was accustomed to stop for the night, until

after the family had retired to rest ; instead, therefore, of disturbing them, as it was the summer season he determined to pass the night out of doors, and so made himself a straw couch in a farm waggon, where, with his knapsack for a pillow, he laid himself down to rest, and was found still fast asleep there in the morning, to the no small surprise of all the household.

At the various stations which he visited periodically, it was his custom to perform the full service, and preach, but he also invariably catechized the young and *taught them their prayers* in the face of the congregation. The correspondent who communicates this fact says,—“ This last exercise had an excellent effect, and many of the most attached members of the Church, in this section of the Province, at this day, speak with gratitude and affection of the benefit they derived from his pastoral care in this particular, and I am persuaded that it has had the effect of causing many to remain steadfast to their profession who would otherwise have yielded to the seductions of dissent.” The following anecdote is worth recording in illustration of the benefit arising from such a practice :—

“ I cannot refrain,” says the same correspondent, “ from mentioning one pleasing proof of the efficacy of his labours with which I became acquainted shortly after my appointment to this Mission. I was called to visit a sick man far advanced in years on the opposite side of the bay. The settlement did not bear the best of characters, and had not been visited for a number of years by a clergyman, and I expected to find him extremely ignorant, especially of the teaching of the Church ; but judge my surprise when, on conversing with this aged man, the head of a large family of children and grandchildren, I found him quite conversant with the doctrines and usages of the Church, and even spoke her language, for although he had been blind upwards of twelve years, he had been in the habit of daily repeating some of the appropriate collects and prayers of the Liturgy which he had been taught by Mr. Langhorn. It appeared Mr. L. had a regular station in the neighbourhood, and this man and his wife were members of his flock. The poor old man spoke in most affectionate terms of his spiritual Father, and of the benefit he derived from the prayers he had learned, and the instructions he had received in former days. It afforded me much pleasure to minister to these aged pilgrims, and to be the humble instrument of smoothing their pathway to the land of rest which they shortly afterwards entered. They died within a short time of each other, an event I have observed of frequent occurrence where the parties have lived long together and been mutually attached. In burying them I took occasion to remind the large assemblage, which comprised several of Mr. Lang-

horn's hearers, of the privileges they had enjoyed, under the faithful pastor who had laboured among them in former years, and hoped that his labour had not been in vain."

Mr. Langhorn was bold in rebuking vice, and maintained as strictly as possible the discipline of the Church, by excluding evil livers from the Holy Communion. While his hand was always open to the sick and unfortunate, he sternly refused to help the drunkard or the sluggard.

"In his journeys he often sought out objects of charity. An old gentleman who knew him well, and who had been married by him fifty-five years ago, lately told me that when travelling his calls were by no means confined to those cottages whose decent exterior promised a comfortable supply of his wants. He often made the petition for a cup of cold water, or some request, a pretext for inquiring into the circumstances of a family. He would sit down and enter into familiar conversation with all, and after obtaining such information as he required, he would pay for his meal or cup of water in proportion to the poverty of the family."

To indulge in the luxury of giving, on such an income as the Missionary receives, requires, of course, the strictest economy, and complete self-denial in all matters of personal expenditure.

"On the occasion of the Bishop of Quebec visiting Mr. Langhorn's Mission to hold a Confirmation, &c. his Lordship took occasion to remark upon the shabbiness of his gown, and expressed a desire that he would provide himself with a more decent one. He promptly replied, 'My Lord, this gown is as good as I can afford to wear. My income, your lordship knows, is small, and I have an aged mother and unmarried sister in England, to whose support I must contribute. If you wish me to wear a better one, I hope your Lordship will supply me with it.'

"His domestic regulations were in keeping with his other habits. *Order* prevailed throughout. In his *own* room he had an order and arrangement peculiarly his own, which he strove to preserve by excluding every one. He was never married, nor did he ever burthen himself with housekeeping. He boarded in three families during his abode in Canada, and they all entertain the highest regard for him, and speak affectionately of his memory. His bed, the frame of which was of iron, must have been a curiosity, for from the accounts given of it, it more resembled an *oriole's* nest than a bed. He would never allow the females of the house to touch it, nor would he sleep on it unless he made it up himself."

If these anecdotes serve to convey a fair notion of Mr. Langhorn's personal habits and peculiarities, there are others

which must impress us with a very high sense of his sterling worth.

“Dr. B—— gives an anecdote of his scrupulous regard to truth in his statements, and correctness in his dealings. At one of his stations where he performed services, nearly twenty miles from his residence, he made a statement publicly respecting some matter conceived by others to be not of much importance; but, on returning home, he discovered that he was in error. Although much fatigued with his long tour, which had just terminated, he hired a waggon and horses to take him back to the spot, that he might acknowledge his mistake, and have it publicly corrected. On another occasion he walked on foot to Kingston, a distance of eighteen miles, to correct an omission in his account. It appeared he had obtained a quantity of linen, part of which was for a surplice, which had not been charged to him. In his simplicity, he imagined that this omission had been intentional on the part of the clerk to test his punctuality and honesty. The merchant had to assure him to the contrary, and, to satisfy him, summoned his clerks and reprimanded them for their negligence in his presence.”

In respect to intellectual acquirements, we are told that Mr. Langhorn had a remarkable facility for the acquisition of languages, and had made some proficiency in German; but the science most compatible with his ministerial avocations, and for the prosecution of which, indeed, they supplied constant opportunities, was natural history.

“During his day the settlements through which he travelled abounded with game and wild animals; and he often availed himself of the opportunities afforded him of examining and taking drawings of them. These examinations, and the inquiries which he made respecting their habits, proved him to have been something of a naturalist. The woods and roadside also afforded him an opportunity of prosecuting an investigation into the botanical productions of the country. A worthy matron, one of his pupils, lately informed me that, when a girl, she often presented him with a rare plant or wild flower, and it was amusing to see how carefully he examined it. It is highly probable he forwarded the result of his inquiries and collections to some of his clerical friends in England. One friend of his made a benefaction of a handsome silver chalice and plate for the Communion of his church at Bath. He was a Dr. Townson. These articles are at present in use, and bear an inscription.”

Surrounded as he was by dissenters of various sects, who set all ecclesiastical order at defiance, Mr. Langhorn considered it to be his duty to insist upon a strict observance of the rules of the Church. He would never dispense with the number of

sponsors required by the Rubric at every baptism ; and he was particular in requiring as full security as possible for the religious education of those who were brought to the font. He declined to perform the funeral service over unbaptized infants. " This," he says, " caused some uneasiness ;" and he adds, " It is a great grievance to many here that I will not look upon their preachers. They would take it mighty well if I would think favourably of all religions ; but there is no likelihood of their being gratified in that, and so I shall not be popular among them." In a letter, written during the year 1804, he represents Ernest Town as " a place very disaffected to the Church of England."

The dissenting ministers wished to be allowed to preach in the pulpits of the Church, and would fain have made Mr. Langhorn promise not to call in question their religious tenets either in the pulpit or out of it. " However, after all," he candidly confesses, " there are a few tolerably good Christians among them." His dislike of Romanism and of Protestant dissent was equally strong ; but the outward expression of it was reserved for the teachers of the respective systems. With them he would not so much as eat, nor walk on the same side of the road ; but, at the same time, he never willingly interfered with them. A strong exemplification of this feeling is found in the following anecdote, somewhat after the manner of Dr. Johnson, which is told in the neighbourhood of his Mission.

" An old presbyterian minister in the township of Fredericksburg, who died a few years ago, informed me that he had much respect for Mr. Langhorn, and had made repeated endeavours to be on *brotherly* terms with him, but his advances were invariably repulsed. ' One day,' observed he, ' riding on horseback, in the spring of the year, when the roads were exceedingly muddy, the footing uncertain, and walking a labour, I overtook the old gentleman in a wood—and much of our roads then lay through woods. He appeared much exhausted with walking, and well might he be, for there was a wall of trees on either side, which prevented the circulation of the air, and the sun's rays were pouring down with great intensity. Now, thought I, his reverence is fatigued, and I will avail myself of the opportunity of making friends with him, by offering him my horse. So I rode up and addressed him, " Good day to you, Mr. Langhorn ;" he stopped and looked round, and when he perceived who it was, gave me to understand by his look and manner that he was not obliged to me for my salutation. However, I thought at all hazards I would carry out my intention, and so proceeded :— " It is a very warm day, sir ; the roads are bad, and you appear fatigued. Allow me to offer you my horse." He again stopped, and eyeing me very seriously, said, " Sir, you are a promoter of

schism in the flock of Christ,—I cannot, therefore, have any intercourse with you, much less accept any favour from you; please keep at your own side of the road, and go your way." After that I left him to himself.'

"The same gentleman married a Miss W——, a lamb of Mr. Langhorn's flock, and one of his most hopeful catechumens. Her marriage, she informed me, gave him serious offence; and although her residence was by the side of the road which he constantly travelled, she could never prevail on him to cross their threshold, or partake of the least refreshment, which was repeatedly offered. He would come to the gate, or even to the door, and ask after her welfare, but his conversation generally ended with a grave shaking of his head, and reminding her of the offence she had committed in marrying a dissenter, and forsaking the Church."

Dr. B——, who well remembers Mr. Langhorn, and cherishes the most affectionate recollection of that worthy man, states his belief that the real reason why he declined to enter the house of Mrs. W. was, that he could not give to those who were subject to Ecclesiastical censure the usual benediction, "Peace be to this house and all that dwell in it," which he was in the habit of giving to the members of his own congregation. Sometimes, indeed, collision could not be avoided; for the dissenting teachers, taking advantage of his rough exterior and want of fluency in speech, would occasionally attack him on some controverted passage, and put him out of humour with their cavils. This used to annoy him at first; but he soon hit upon a remedy for the evil. He adopted the practice of carrying about with him a pocket edition of the Greek Testament, and then, when any preacher attempted to entrap him into a controversy, he would produce the sacred text, and request his antagonist to read a chapter before commencing the dispute. This was commonly decisive in silencing the objector; and then, Mr. Langhorn, turning to the people, would take the opportunity of commenting upon the presumption of those who undertook to teach religion without being able to read the original text, and to dispute about the force of terms without a knowledge of the language from which they were translated. In this manner he soon got rid of his annoyers.

A man of Mr. Langhorn's simplicity of character, and ignorance of the world, is sure to be the subject of much remark; but it is much to his credit, that none of the many anecdotes which are related of him affect his moral character, or imply neglect or indifference in the discharge of his duty. Whatever might be said of his eccentricities, or uncouth manners, it was universally allowed that he was a zealous and devoted, yet humble-minded Missionary.

For health's sake, and to brace his nerves, he used to bathe every morning in Lake Ontario, and this practice he kept up during the coldest days of winter, even when the ice was two feet thick, and he could only get his morning bath by diving through the holes which had been made for the purpose of watering the cattle.

After twenty-five years' service in an itinerant Mission of vast extent, he felt himself no longer equal to the unceasing labour which it required. Pleading, therefore, age and infirmity as the necessary causes of his resignation, he returned to England in the year 1813, with a high testimony to his zeal and faithfulness from the Bishop of Quebec, and was recommended to the Government for a pension, but did not long survive to enjoy it.

The following pleasing tribute to his memory is given by one who has the best opportunities of knowing the estimation in which he was held.

"The name of this 'man of God' in the circle of the Bay of Quinté is really 'as ointment poured forth.' Branches of the families who composed his various congregations are now scattered throughout its length and breadth; and in every settlement the Missionary will perceive some gratifying trace of his godly labours, and is encouraged by friends whose affections are stirred up by the recollections of the benefactor and spiritual instructor of their youth. It is pleasing to witness these traits even in the minds of those who have long since united themselves with some of the various denominations of dissenters. How often have I and my brethren received the kindest attentions from persons of this class, from the respect they entertained for the Church through her pious and single-hearted Missionary's labours in these parts! Of the many I have conversed with, I never heard any speak of him as other than a truly pious and most devoted servant of his Master. Eccentric indeed he was, but

"E'en his failings leaned to virtue's side."

During his ministry he was instrumental in procuring the erection of a neat and commodious church at Bath, a village on the margin of the Bay of Quinté, about eighteen miles from Kingston. He also contrived to erect, chiefly at his own expense, two or three log chapels, one of which was "St. Werberg's" at Fredericksburg. The population of this district has rapidly advanced since the time to which we refer, and many villages have sprung up. But while the forest has been yielding to cultivation, the spiritual husbandman has not been idle; and it is a gratification to know that within *sight* of Mr. Langhorn's former station in the bay, *seven* additional churches have been built, for the service of which there are five clergymen, besides his successor.

